

Eng. Cd. Hist

- New Zealand
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- England
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- Cape Colony
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- Bermuda
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# Imperial Federation League

...FIRST...

## Presidential Address

DELIVERED BY THE

**Hon. ALFRED DEAKIN, M.P.,**

in the Melbourne Town Hall on  
Wednesday, the 14th June, 1905

### BEING

A Manifesto of the  
Aims and Objects  
of the League



Forwarded With the Compliments of the  
PRESIDENT and COMMITTEE of the Im-  
perial Federation League.

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Sir,

I beg leave to direct your attention to the significance of the accompanying manifesto. At the Imperial Conference of 1902, the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., presiding as the Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, asked definitely for some proposals, or for a demand for a closer union, from the Colonies.

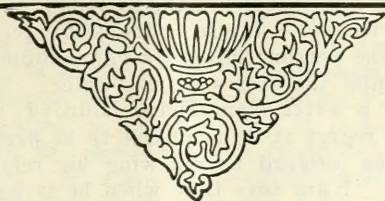
The Manifesto now circulated is a reply offered by the President of the League in Australia as a preliminary to the detailed consideration of issues momentous to the people of the Empire.

Yours faithfully,

H. D'ESTERRE TAYLOR,  
Hon. Sec.



# IMPERIAL FEDERATION



An Address delivered by the  
Hon. Alfred Deakin, M.P.  
at the Annual Meeting of the  
Imperial Federation League of  
Victoria, Town Hall, Mel-  
bourne, June 14, 1905 ◻ ◻

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**A Manifesto of the Objects  
and Aims of the League**

# IMPERIAL FEDERATION

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## THE RETIRING PRESIDENT.

I am sure you all regret, with me, the resignation of the able, courageous, and eloquent judge who has been compelled, by reasons of health, to resign the presidency of this league. I also personally regret the deficiencies of the person chosen by your committee to endeavour to fulfil the duties of this office. I am happy to have here a letter from Judge Holroyd, in which he expresses his regret at being unable to be present to-day, but still looks forward to renewing his relations with this League. I am sure that when he is again able to attend no man will be more welcome.

## EMPIRE DAY.

It would have been appropriate, if circumstances had permitted us, to hold this meeting upon what is now known, and is likely to be known, as Empire Day. Probably the committee will consider whether, in future years, that would not be a period at which we might very appropriately take our annual review of Imperial questions, so far as we have been able to consider them. In the meantime, the celebrations this year are memorable, not only on account of their extent and multiplicity, but because of the evidence they afford of the existence of tendencies for which it ought to be possible for this League to find useful employment. I was particularly gratified to notice in the Empire Day number of the "School Paper" of the Education Department of Victoria for Classes V. and VI., a picturesque and impressive description of the British Empire—its extent, its power, and the pride we ought to feel in it, which does not overlook such errors as have been associated with its growth, but dwells most admirably upon the duties of those who enjoy its protection. The lessons of history appear to have been summarised in this paper in a most excellent fashion by Mr. William Gillies, M.A., author of "Simple Studies in English History," and I think there could be no better expenditure of funds, if we had them to spare, than in the re-publication of such



a paper, for the purpose of placing it in the hands of the whole of the children of this community.

### WHAT IS OUR EMPIRE ?

Turning for an opening text to "Colonies and Colonial Federations" in the "English Citizen Series," by Mr. E. J. Payne, a Fellow of University College, Oxford, I find, set out in an unconventional way, a view of the Empire as a whole, which affords us matter for consideration. Mr. Payne says :—

"The Empire, . . . by some denounced or derided  
"as a misleading abstraction, . . . is as much a sub-  
"stantive reality as the composite United Kingdom from  
"which it springs. In both there is the same pervading  
"sense of the possession of a common and rather pecu-  
"liar civilisation, and the same conviction that this  
"civilisation is worth preserving and keeping intact. It  
"is a civilisation which, like many other things, is most  
"easily described in terms of what it is not. It is not  
"aristocratic nor democratic; it might be called aristo-  
"democratic. It is not the civilisation of a dog-rotten  
"bureaucracy out of all sympathy with the people, and  
"as obsolete at bottom as that of China itself. It is  
"not a brain-cram and boot-jack civilisation. It is not  
"a dollar-for-its-own-sake civilisation. Be it what it  
"may, it is something which no country outside the Em-  
"pire has got. Impersonal in its operation, it is some-  
"thing founded on the average personality of the Brit-  
"annic citizen. It is something which respects and is  
"disposed to be satisfied with what exists, is not prone  
"to imitation, and adapts itself slowly to the state of  
"facts, the course of events, and the changeful character  
"of circumstances; but possesses, nevertheless, initiative  
"as well as staying power; which can distribute itself  
"with ease by many channels, and increase its original  
"energy in each; which develops the man all round, and  
"applies itself equally to business, to local government  
"and politics; which is interested in science and in  
"charitable and philanthropic work; likes society and  
"club life, loves sport and miscellaneous reading, and is  
"devoted to country pursuits, after-dinner speeches, and  
"travel by land and sea; which thinks life worthless, un-  
"less based on fair play and straight dealing, and in-  
"complete unless equally developed in the home, the local  
"district, the State, and, we will add with confidence,  
"the Empire."

### GROWTH OF EMPIRE.

That, I take it, is a very breezy, up-to-date sketch of our Empire, such as would never have suggested itself

to the scholars of a previous day, but which in itself does remind us, in a very forcible fashion, of the great variety and complexity of what is known as the British Empire. It is a commonplace, of course, that this Empire has never been built upon any plan. According to one distinguished authority,—I think Professor Sir J. R. Seeley,—it was created in a fit of absence of mind, and since its creation has often been preserved and extended in the same hap-hazard and careless fashion. There are those who think it may be permitted to continue to take its chances in that way, but I venture to submit that in so assuming they overlook the entire change of circumstances witnessed during the last century or half century. After all, ours is not the first "empire" that has arisen, and would not be the first to pass away, if that were its fortune. The empires that the world has seen, when they ceased to be able to sustain the strain to which they were exposed, whether from within or without, have disappeared, and any empire found inefficient in these days of severe tension must follow the same road more rapidly. Besides, there is this marked contrast in the circumstances. Ours is not the only "empire" in existence. We are only one of a cluster of great states. The consequence is that we are introduced into a sphere of what may be termed cosmopolitan politics, that have changed, are changing, and will continue to change, making it necessary for continuous reconsiderations of our position.

#### INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES.

We have witnessed in recent times the development of what is known in the United States as "the great industry," where, by combination, a certain number of companies or firms control and finally absorb the whole commercial power of some particular lines of production. They do that by combination, and by combination become irresistible. A similar tendency necessarily discovers itself in the international world under circumstances such as the present, where combinations, or, as we there term them, alliances, are becoming a governing factor. As a consequence the "splendid isolation" which was maintained for some considerable period by Great Britain has, I venture to think, passed away for ever. The great Powers are committed to alliances more or less definite already, and are likely to remain so. When there are a number of great powers in competition, with diversified and clashing interests, those who have community of aims are necessarily forced into a more or less complete



union. Without the alliance of Great Britain on the one side and of France on the other, the present unhappy and disastrous war now being waged in the East would undoubtedly have embroiled other combatants. Alliances at present are necessary as a guarantee of peace. On the other hand, they make for the greater scope and seriousness of war when once it becomes more than a duel. If the future, so to speak, is to alliances, the first consideration for every great Power will be to make itself an ally to be sought as well as an enemy to be feared. Moving through the very precarious circumstances of the present time, even if we possessed allies of the first quality, it would be absolutely necessary for the Empire to raise itself to its highest pitch of efficiency, in order to preserve them, and to fulfil its part in the politics of the time. In order to keep allies we must become a desirable partner. We must strengthen ourselves to be able to gain friends, and, if necessary, be able to dispense with them. We must consolidate empire with empire; not to despoil others, but to retain what we possess; strengthen ourselves, not with a view to war, but in the hope of maintaining peace.

#### INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION.

I am sure that every member of this League would hail the establishment of international arbitration. (Hear, hear.) We look forward to the days when a sovereign and impartial international tribunal will be created, capable of enforcing its decrees. No one will pretend to expect such a climax immediately. We may foresee a day when we shall be able to dispense with police, gaols, and, perhaps, written contracts, but we do not anticipate that this expectation will immediately affect the annual estimates of Victoria or the prospects of the legal profession. (Laughter.) We desire to hasten the coming of these more civilised conditions, but until they come, I venture to believe that we require, as of old, to "trust in God and keep our powder dry." (Hear, hear.)

#### NEW POWERS.

Alliances being an essential element of stability, we may for a moment ask ourselves how they now affect us. It is almost a century ago since Canning made his famous vaunt about bringing in the new world to redress the balance of the old. What he did bring in were a few South American republics, which ever since then have had more than enough to do to keep their own balance, such as it is, by the help of the Munroe doctrine, without attempting to redress anything. But the inter-

national balance has been redressed most impressively of late under our very eyes. Two new powers have entered the lists, the United States and Japan, with whom the Empire, as a whole, has many interests in common, and with both of whom Australia has, and is likely to have, very special relations. We are, therefore, more than ever reminded of our imperial obligations and needs in respect to them and to our possible friends or foes, which constitutes, I think, a call to self-examination, and, possibly, some penitence for neglected opportunities in the past. We have lately learned to regard all States as organisms,—to believe they should be scientifically studied as living things. Certainly, the unconsciousness of physical growth is illustrated in British history. Our Empire was not made as a piece of mechanism is manufactured. If it were, it might be, if possible, even more extraordinarily complex than it is at present. We are assured that the proper explanation of its origin is Topsy's—"s'pec's I growed!" Each nation has its life, and, consequently, may have its death. It must, if living, keep on growing. It must either grow or decay. When I speak of growth, I am not referring to area, military ambition, or greed, but to a growth in vigour, efficiency, and political capacity.

#### IMPERIAL UNION.

It is admitted that only within comparatively recent years have we come to national self-consciousness. Our able lecturer in literature, Mr. Walter Murdoch, the other evening pointed to Kipling as one of the first who had assisted at this birth, and in his very valuable work on "Colonial Nationalism" Mr. Jebb takes a similar view. In the light of that self-consciousness we are now under a more searching review than of old of our resources, weaknesses, and potentialities. We are at last making some kind of endeavour to adjust ourselves to the Empire, and to adjust the Empire to the modern world. It is not necessary to catalogue the centripetal forces that draw us Australians to the Mother Country. The same ties of blood, sympathy, history, and tradition which make us one Commonwealth here, make the British of to-day one people everywhere. Imperial federation points to closer relations, not only with Great Britain, but with all those great dominions of hers of the same type, at present disconnected, except by "one flag, one fleet, one throne." As a united whole we appear none too strong to protect ourselves against those other Powers who are to-day our rivals, and may at any time become our foes. As an unit Australia, with her



small population, if we stood alone, must obviously fall a prey to allied aggression. Even Great Britain herself, if confined to Europe, must shrink from the high estate and commanding authority she now enjoys. All our interests, all our memories, characters, aims, and hopes of realising them pacifically must draw us closer together. Our race has its faults, and plenty of them, but we would be much poorer, and the world as a whole deeply impoverished, if we were scattered peoples, marching apart in segments instead of confronting destiny shoulder to shoulder. (Applause.)

#### OUR TITLE.

I admit that "Empire" is not a perfect title for the union we hope to see, and even "Federation" has a negative rather than a positive meaning in this connection. There are also some associations with the word "Imperialism," which we ought to be anxious to avoid, but no better terms being available, we accept these subject to the qualification that they are employed by us with no intention of reviving reminiscences of the reigns of might and force, martial power and tyranny, with which empires have been maintained in times past or are in Russia to-day. Mr. Payne has said that "The Britannic Empire is the first school—to all appearance 'the only school ever destined to exist—of co-operative statesmanship on a large scale.'" In the endeavour to find a better title for it twenty years ago I suggested "Co-operative Empire," and some years later "Collective Imperialism," but cannot, even as their parent, pretend to any fondness for these inconvenient phrases. But whatever its educational associations, or historical associations, "Empire" seems the best available name. Federation to us means a voluntary union of States. We seek not to narrow, but to enlarge our citizenship, entrusting the accumulated privileges that it will confer to the largest possible number of citizens of our race, so as to give our social structure the broadest base and firmest foundation.

#### FEDERATION OR ALLIANCE.

Mr. Jebb traces a distinction between "federation" and an "alliance" within the Empire, by defining these words in a manner which, from my standpoint, appears arbitrary. There is no real opposition in the ideas sought to be distinguished by him though there may be a sequence. A federation is a particular form of such an alliance. Apparently, what he favours should be styled a "confederation" of States within the Empire, each of them a unit, dealing with its fellow States as units.

This would not permit either a common citizenship or a federal legislature chosen directly by all the people of these States, endowed with plenary powers within certain clearly defined limits. A true federation would. The difference between confederation and federation is real, so real that the kinds of alliances they represent may be dealt with as mutually exclusive. They are not necessarily to be so treated, or to be opposed as antagonistic, during our growth. As a League we favour federation in some form. That is the ultimate goal of our ambition, though there are patriotic alliances which may anticipate and prelude it. The strongest and most intimate "alliance" will always be that of people with people, citizen with citizen, directly and on the same footing, instead of their external junction in masses as separate States, indirectly through their Governments. It is quite probable that our existing confederacy may last for some time to come, and may have to suffice pending the adoption of federal principles. There is not yet a rigid antithesis between them, and we need not create one. We must wait, and must be content to wait without dogmatising.

#### A CONSTITUTION FOR THE EMPIRE.

A formal and complete constitution for the Empire may not come into being for a long time to come. (Note 1.) No artificial bonds can

1. If, on the other hand, we are to strengthen the ties, it does not seem that any merely commercial arrangements will be sufficient, or that any formal constitution-making is practicable. Tariff reformers are among those with whom I am working, but they do not put their trust in preferential tariffs alone; and for my own part, regardless of the merits of any possible scheme of imperial economics, I doubt whether any such matter can even be adequately discussed among the States of the Empire without much better means of consultation than exist at present. As for any kind of formal constitution, it assumes the consent of several independent legislatures, and involves a considerable modification of their existing authority. I am not aware of any reason for thinking that the Parliament of the United Kingdom would easily be persuaded to reduce itself by a solemn act to a mere State Legislature, or that the Colonial Governments would be willing to surrender any substantial part of their autonomy to some new Federal Senate or Council. All the information at our disposal goes to show that nothing of the kind has any chance of being accepted, or even of seeming plausible enough to induce any Ministry to take it in hand. Besides, it is notorious that of late years, by reason of causes not the less effectual because they are irrelevant to the merits, constructive and systematic legislation on any considerable scale has become not less but more difficult. And this would be a legislative construction of unprecedented magnitude. (Pollock, pp. 7, 8.)



satisfy us. We start with a magnificent patrimony, desiring to see a natural development from the present loosely associated and imperfectly organised collection of self-governing States into a better jointed, sufficiently flexible and more efficient union. As this will require the free assent of all those States, that union must be brought about in a deliberate and gradual fashion, as becomes its magnitude and the intricacy of the interests involved. We are not dealing with the life of a man, but of a people that after a thousand years' experience finds itself still full of sap and spirit, and capable of glorious exploits. To live, our nation must act upon, and be acted upon by its surroundings doing each day to the best of its ability whatever that day demands for its preservation and improvement. As an Empire we are young, not old; pliable, not set; in the gristle, not in the bone. It, therefore, becomes us to refrain from attempting all things in an hour. The practical question is, How shall we deal with the plastic possibilities of our political life, so as to become well equipped for the uncertain future? We do not set out in this League to propound with professional dignity a particular method of realising our ideals. On the contrary, we desire both to learn and to teach at the same time. One imperial problem or another, rising out of our defective combination, will present itself in some part of the Empire, will be discussed in some or all of its representative bodies, and, perhaps, criticised more or less generally by the press within its borders. To assist discussions of this kind is particularly and perpetually the duty of this League. The many problems of imperial life cannot be avoided. They will appear inevitably because of our growth, and the more we grow the more frequent they will become. They should be sought out in advance and carefully studied, so that we may not be snared by surprise or overwhelmed by some world calamity before we have braced ourselves to meet it.

#### NEED FOR FORESIGHT.

Mr. Payne remarks: "Somebody has said that the 'most probable dissolvent of the Britannic Empire in 'the future is ignorance.'" Now if this League exists for anything, it exists to endeavour to remove the want of knowledge of its own members and those outside its ranks. No words of mine, I hope, are needed to commend this task to you. A life without foresight, depending upon instinctive agility or impromptu devices, shaped under pressure of emergency, belongs even among

individuals to the primitive and youthful stage, not to the civilised and matured. Such tactics cannot suffice for any nation that means to accomplish its best or to preserve what it has got by inheritance or effort of its own. Hand-to-mouth expediences, and the mistakes they bring in their train, may be unavoidable, and not too costly, in minor matters in the case of the individual. We go with a fair amount of confidence along our Melbourne pavements, notwithstanding the existence of motor-cars or pom-pom bicycles. But if we were travelling in darkest Africa or Arabia, an unknown country containing foreign tribes, armed and of uncertain disposition, we would go much better prepared for resistance and wary of possible ambushes. Sad it is to say that such an expedition exposed to savage risks only too faithfully figures the perils of the maze of foreign politics which the Empire has to thread day by day. We have to consider not only that mishaps are probable, but the fact that any one of them may be fatal. In these times of unrest, oversight, neglect, hesitancy, may wreck a great nation in a few days. A decisive defeat, especially at sea, may in a few hours beat down its guard, constitute an irretrievable disaster, and leave it to the tender mercies of its conqueror.

#### DEFENCE BY A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Defence then becomes of the greatest possible importance to the existence of a modern State. It is the first condition of its being. In defence the governing power plays in one sense the greatest part. With us the governing power means the people as a whole, but in the hour of trial it must mean those whom the people have entrusted with the control of their affairs, and those whom they have disciplined to protect them. The governing power of the Empire to-day is its sovereign, under whom a Ministry, chosen by the electors of the mother country, acts for all its peoples, whether self-governing or not, or whether they are consulted or not as to any decision to declare war or make peace. We, the unrepresented subordinate States, legally may, or may not, aid the mother country actively in time of strife, or some may and others may not, just as now in time of peace some attempt to support the navy in readiness for war and others do not. Though the Parliament of Great Britain has no direct connection with colonial constituencies, it possesses, in theory, the amplest power to legislate for them, and tax them at its pleasure. It is also held answerable for them to



other powers under all circumstances. (Note 2.) We are thus subject to a Government which is not ours except by tradition and precedent, but which possesses absolute authority over us—the authority of an Imperial Government and an Imperial Parliament always exercised so far with the greatest consideration and caution, and always likely to be. For all that, its power is exercised with no direct warrant from us. It is surely unreasonable to suppose that this state of affairs can continue indefinitely. Unless the heart sends its blood to the extremities, and receives it back to send it forth re-invigorated and re-invigorating, the body sickens, dwindles, and dies. Unless the life-blood of the nation circulates regularly and freely to the extremities of the nation, they can not participate in its growth, or behold it in the full plenitude of its powers. The choice before an Empire such as ours lies between integration and disintegration. The choice, whether we integrate or disintegrate, will be made by the people. To make a wise choice, and adopt sound methods of giving effect to it, the people must be informed of all necessary facts affecting all branches of the united race, in order that they may study the wide horizons of world-politics, and the grave responsibilities that attach to world powers in the times of trouble and turmoil on which we have entered, among which the paths of peace are neither easily found nor kept. (Note 3.)

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2. It may therefore not be superfluous to ask your attention for a few moments to the map of the world, and to the unique international and strategic situation of the land "thereon coloured red," as we say in conveyances. Before the law of nations these lands are all one. If a Swiss or Argentine citizen has a real or supposed grievance in New Zealand, or in British Columbia, for which he cannot get redress in the ordinary course of law, his government makes diplomatic representations not at Wellington or Ottawa, but at the Foreign Office in London. There have been times when an indiscreet act of some petty Newfoundland officer might have committed these kingdoms and the whole empire to war with France. Conversely, claims of a British subject in any part of the world against a foreign Power can be urged only by the Home Government. (Pollock, p. 5.)

3. As the very latest writer on international law has said, Colonial States have no international position whatever.

Again, trade and communication between these dispersed lands depend on the sea; and for strategic purposes the sea is all one, as we have been told by the highest naval authority.

"The British Empire presents the unique spectacle of a metropolitan State controlling by sundry and manifold relations a number of possessions and dependencies in different parts of the world, all of them relying for defence and protec-

## THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

We have handed down to us the prize won, after a noble, stormy, but by no means impeccable career, by our forefathers—the United Kingdoms of to-day—straining a constitution originally made for one only, which, however it may “broaden down from precedent to precedent,” is obviously ill-adapted for constant and ready co-operation with the distant dominions it has founded, particularly those enjoying self-government, whose sons are as jealous of their liberties as they are proud of their gallant ancestry. That interesting constitution, mediæval in form, unitary in principle, and composite in character, ought to be re-adapted now and made capable of further re-adaptation. It ought not to retain useless forms or effete survivals, or it will become too weak for the great forces working within and without it. To make the best of its best we must look to patient, tolerant, and searching study of our social state and political requirements. Time presses; the modern spirit presses us on. The new imperial wine threatens to burst the old constitutional wineskins. Let

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tion mainly upon the imperial command of the seas. No other empire has been, or is, so constituted; and this geographical situation lies at the base of our Colonial policy. Great Britain has acquired, during the course of the nineteenth century, the habit of holding her possessions in North America and Australasia upon the very singular political tenure of sovereignty by mutual consent.”—Sir A. Lyall, “Life of the Marquis of Duferin and Ava” (1905), i. 229.

Here is a solidarity capable of grave consequences. The mother country and the colonies, like partners, are liable for each other's acts to the uttermost farthing. External unity of this kind seems to require some internal unity of direction to make it prudent for reasonable men to accept its attendant risk. According to strict legal theory, that unity is given in the supremacy of the King, exercised either in the Parliament of the United Kingdom or through Ministers responsible to it. But this has long been a legal fiction. The partnership cannot at this day be treated as a one-man company in which the parent is the sole manager. Our colonies are autonomous in their internal affairs as fully as the colonies of Greek cities were, and in external affairs the tendency is to stop only at matters which may touch peace and war. There is still a senior partner holding and staking most, but the junior partners are not merely members of the family admitted to nominal shares. And there are no partnership articles.

The national faculty of compromise has enabled us hitherto to carry on the business somehow, but can we go on trusting to compromises and accidents? Is it worthy of this Empire to have no policy for the management of its affairs, as a whole, but a policy of drift? (Pollock, p. 6.)



us then begin in some manner, without haste and without rest, to undertake, as an Empire, this day's labours.

### OBJECTS OF THE LEAGUE.

To assist in some degree the education of public opinion on imperial questions is the great aim of this League. Its objects are : (1) To maintain the unity of the British dominions, and (2) strengthen it in the future by some form of federation. Our fundamental resolutions declare that the chief objects of the League are to secure by some form of federation the permanent unity of the Empire; that no scheme of federation should interfere with the existing rights of local Parliaments as regards local affairs; that permanent federation can be secured and maintained only by a system of common defence, devised and eventually controlled by representatives from all parts of the Empire; and that, in the meantime, the details of any plan affecting the common interests of the Empire can only be properly considered by conferences of representatives from all parts of the Empire. The establishment of such conferences is our constant aim. (Note 4.) The League exists to stimulate thought, increase knowledge, and assist in the elucidation of all proposals which make for unity, while safeguarding local interests, upon federal principles. The League is neither wedded to a pet scheme of its own, nor does it seek to establish an orthodoxy in respect to any opinion its officers may hold. Your president has no power to bind any of you. Speaking for myself I have no wish to see this League, as a League, adopt my own views, which are, nevertheless, very precise and attractive to me. We adopt the broadest basis possible, so that all who are friends of the Empire may come in and join our endeavour to assist in the solution of imperial problems. To ventilate them, examine

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4. It must be clearly understood that no proposal is now made either to bind any Colonial Government beforehand to the acceptance of any decision which it has not specifically approved, or to interfere with the power and duty of the King's Ministers here to take prompt and decisive action, at need, on their own responsibility. We have lately had a striking example of the wholly unexpected emergencies that may occur. Such occasions, moreover, are not limited to warlike action or preparation, as those of us know who are old enough to remember the purchase of the Suez Canal shares. Not to hamper the executive authority of the central Government, but to strengthen it for action by the fullest and most intimate acquaintance with the conditions of the Empire and the mind of its component States, is the object aimed at. (Pollock, pp. 10, 11.)

them, and contrast them is our principal task. There is room within our ranks for great varieties of opinion. The more and the more active they are, the better if they are but arguable. We are sentinels in a time of peace, and nothing is so culpable in a sentinel as that he should sleep at his post. We want more citizen sentinels, better drilled in their duties.

### THE CLAIMS OF EMPIRE.

Shall we be opposed in our own community?—Certainly. At the very outset, we superimpose another demand on a community, many of whose members neglect to exercise the political privileges they have. One would not willingly press another claim upon them except on the grounds of imperious necessity, but the necessity exists, and is increasing. While it is hoped that every member of the League continues to be a zealous ratepayer in his municipality and an active elector in State and Commonwealth we are obliged to remind him that the guarantee of his retention of each and all of these privileges, and of their free exercise by his children, very largely depends upon the fate of the Empire. His imperial citizenship is indispensable to the enjoyment of his present franchise and all that it confers; but his imperial citizenship is at present inchoate. It must be made actual and operative in his own interest, and for the sake of his country. We cannot, if we would, escape the risks that attach to a world-power any more than the daily risks of life and health. They are much less than our risks for Australia would be if the Empire collapsed. Having already the responsibilities of Empire, or most of them, we need the correlative rights. The patriotic sentiment in Australia is strong and can always be relied upon. We wish to see it guided into useful channels of constitutional freedom, which can only be shaped by degrees. It is urgent because of the complex issues to be dealt with, that we should at once commence to draw plans for them while we have leisure and peace. The world moves, and we move with it, whether we like it or not. We must either drop behind in the race with our rivals or keep ahead of the times and in touch with its opportunities. This League hopes to act as a stimulus to inquiry and reflection, which will, by and by, be provocative of judicious action.

### CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

A constitution such as the British, made in the distant past for a handful of people, has now to be reshaped to the requirements of an Empire stretching to



the four quarters of the world, containing many countries, colonised or conquered, and dealing with the fortunes of hundreds of millions. The change cannot be made in a moment, or, perhaps, at any time, by a single effort. We are not concerned to present a symmetrical constitutional façade upon paper, but to alter where alteration is necessary, to add tentatively, and proceed experimentally in broadening our political organisation, retaining the privilege of retracing our steps if any part of the experiment fails, as to that part and its related adjustments. We are in the position of engineers who have to make repairs while the machinery is going, or in the brief intervals of its cessation. We cannot stop it while we substitute a new plant, nor can we rely indefinitely upon the silken bonds of sentiment. Precious as they are, they would be of little value if they were suddenly found to be our only reliance while the ship was dragging her anchors on a lee shore. Any structural unity of the Empire will have to be established as our successes in contrivances for special needs can be harmonised and combined, and must allow of other additions and amendments, as our inheritors may determine. There can be no stagnation of national life that is not malarious. The time has passed when the colonies were thought likely to drop off like ripe fruit, if they were not thrown off, as millstones from her neck, by an impatient parent. There is safety, both for parent and children, in union, and only in union.

### COLONIAL PERILS.

Those who suppose that we have no interests to protect forget the Napoleonic expedition to Mexico, the struggle with Venezuela, the racial unrest in Brazil, and certain occurrences in San Domingo. But for the power of the United States the European appetite for colonies would have been gratified in these latitudes, as well as in Manchuria and China. The events which will follow upon the opening of the Nicaragua Canal, our joint protectorate in the New Hebrides, recent trade disputes in the Marshall Islands, the future of the Pacific when the stream of shipping sets in across it to our shores—all help to remind us how much has to be done for Australia that Australia cannot do for herself. (Applause.) It is because we are under the aegis of the Empire that we have been allowed so long to retain possession of the immense tracts of unoccupied territory in this continent. What would be our position if called upon to defend settlements on our northern or north-west coasts, not even peopled at the present time, and

almost incapable of being protected by us at this distance? It would be costly indeed to maintain a military force strong enough to repel an invasion of Port Darwin or Kimberley, or to make us masters in any national sense of the territory we at present own. I hope these allusions to bellicose possibilities will not be mistaken for rudiments of militarism. We have to prepare in order to preserve peace. For my own part I most cordially endorse the words of Judge Holroyd, when he said, in his powerful address, delivered in July, 1903 :—

"The real aim of what we call Imperial Federation . . . is to secure the citizens of all the component parts of the British Empire from foreign aggression, to enable them to work out undisturbed their own domestic problems, and, as a corollary, to provide means for the settlement of any disputes which may arise between the parts themselves."

Every syllable of that appears to me exact.

#### DEFENCE CONTRIBUTIONS.

I have suggested that a great part of our work as a League will lie in educating ourselves and others upon imperial questions. Take, for instance, that upon which I have touched already; the question of Defence. Here we have done something for ourselves, and we have done something for the Empire in South Africa. We are also doing a little for the Imperial Navy—a very little, and less for ourselves, for our own navy. Since 1887 I have been a supporter of the subsidy granted to the Imperial Navy, but always on the plea that it was the only possible means then available of recognising our obligations, and as a strictly temporary expedient. Speaking for myself, it seems to me that the Imperial Navy must always be our first line of defence here and everywhere, but I do not think, and never have thought, a contribution in cash, as now paid to the Admiralty, the most satisfactory means of recognising that obligation. We have added, in the last agreement, the training of a certain number of Australian seamen, who are paid a higher wage. Part of our subsidy may be taken as spent in that fashion, and to that extent justified. But while broaching this question now, I shall not attempt to discuss it, though I hope it will be thrashed out before this League and the public as early as it conveniently can. It is a pressing question, which needs to be considered and re-considered at length. The Admiral on this station has recently asked us to double our subsidy, and we have seen



various scales of comparison compounded, in which it is sought to determine in £ s. d. what the obligations of Australia and other dominions are to each other and to the mother country. These are all more or less unsatisfactory, and will require very close examination at our hands. I merely notice in passing that the British estimates leave out of all account anything like a contra account on the part of Australia, although it undoubtedly exists, while the Australian estimates leave out the manifest contra that there is on the Imperial account. I touch upon this only in passing, to indicate that this particular problem as to any and what contribution we shall pay, is one well worthy of debate in every part of the Empire, so that the discussion be temperate, calm, and recognised as likely to furnish only some general basis for computation. It was at the conference of 1887 that Mr. Hofmeyr made his famous proposal, which has been revived and approved by Sir George Sydenham Clarke, the late Governor of Victoria, that a duty should be imposed on foreign goods entering the Empire, in order to create a fund for imperial defence. Whether our contribution be by way of a grant or the imposition of a duty, it requires to be discussed equally from the financial standpoint and from the constitutional standpoint. We take it for granted that no contribution can be made or duty imposed that is not voted by the several local Parliaments. It is not to be supposed that the Imperial Government would exercise its abstract right to levy such a duty without consulting the self-governing portions of the Empire. This, therefore, would not be taxation without representation, provided the local Parliaments assent; but it would be expenditure without control, and expenditure without control is foreign to the genius and principles upon which the British Constitution is founded. (Hear, hear.)

#### IMPERIAL FEDERATION.

The other question which then arises, and to which we should require to give our attention, is not less important in this connection. To the question of imperial defence I hope we shall be able to direct the thought, not only of our League, but of the whole of this community, impressing upon them the absolute urgency of sufficient preparations, both local and general. The local preparations we can make through our own Commonwealth Parliament, the general we can determine only in co-operation with the whole Empire. When we consider anything beyond local defences, whether done

by way of contribution, the imposition of a duty, or a combination of these, we raise the whole constitutional problem of imperial federation. This League exists to scrutinise the various doctrines put forward in relation to this central question, and to provide a platform on which it can be freely discussed. I hope we shall be able to invite public men to meet us, and where their papers appear likely to assist and inform the public trust, that we shall have funds enough to publish and circulate them. There can be no privacy in our debates, and no dictatorship, but absolute freedom of opinion. It appears to me that the whole subject of defence itself, and the more difficult subject of the constitutional way in which provision is to be made for it, are neither of them receiving anything like the attention which their gravity demands.

#### PREFERENTIAL TRADE.

Take the next form of defence, or, as some would say, a preliminary condition of all defence, because it gives you something worth defending. It is the commerce of the Empire, for which we maintain cruisers and battleships, undertake annexations, and endeavour to resist invasions. Commerce itself confers inestimable advantages, and taken in its widest sense intellectual, moral, and material, is one of the most powerful agencies of civilisation. But we also know that when it consists of buying and selling it is carried on by competitive methods akin to those of war. Behind the trader stand the soldier and the sailor. A nation undersold in its own markets, its factories closed down, its land put out of cultivation, its people driven abroad, its finances in a state of insolvency, is in much the same plight, because conquered in an industrial combat, as if it had been conquered in war. If the Empire is worth preserving, the trade of the Empire must be worth preserving too. (Applause.) Unless it is preserved, one of the chief supports of union must be destroyed. But this League, as a League, welcomes equally those who believe that preferential trade in the Empire is essential to its growth and power, and those who believe that without free imports we shall be living on each other to our ruin. Here, therefore, is another rich field for thought in the interests of public enlightenment. The fiscal question, apart from its imperial phases, does not seem to be a relevant matter for discussion by this League. But when it is proposed on an imperial scale, and becomes of imperial influence, then our open platform ought to welcome its discussion.



## A PERMANENT IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

Apart from defence, which is dealt with by the Imperial Defence Committee, in Great Britain, and by the Navy League, we have another most interesting development towards constitutional union, whose latest phase, due to Sir Frederick Pollock, has not yet been appreciated by those not connected with public affairs. Our weakness as an Empire arises mainly because we are not a united Empire—we are not even an organised Empire. The subjects of interest common to the mother country and her dependencies have been from time to time dealt with by conferences more cordial, but of the same class as conferences between foreign powers, and labouring under similar disabilities. I attended the first in 1887, and watched its successors. They occasioned no trenching upon the local government of the States. Nothing has been done by them, or through their recommendations, without the consent of the local Parliaments. They have proved extremely useful in arriving at temporary agreements, and paving the way for reciprocal legislation. Every conference is a step towards union, a temporary union, and to further such meetings is part of the constitution of this League. What Sir Frederick Pollock proposes is best understood by remembering these experiences. He aims at connecting these conferences by means of a body of permanent representatives, a kind of continuous conference which would fill the gaps between the formal and more important meetings, would only deal in the meantime with minor matters if authorised by the several States, but would, by these means, make joint action more easily possible, more frequent, and more effective. Such a council would provide an intelligence department for the affairs of the Empire. How much that is needed by the public at large most of us are fairly well aware. There is nothing more desirable as a first step towards a better understanding than the knowledge of all parts of the Empire, which such an intelligence department could obtain, distribute, and preserve. Before acting imperially, we must learn to think imperially, and before that we must have the imperial facts and figures on which we are to do our reasoning.

### SIR F. POLLOCK'S SCHEME.

I hail Sir Frederick Pollock's proposal with the warmest sympathy. Let him describe it in his own words. He says:—

“The Committee would virtually consist of the different Governments in consultation. The questions which “would come before the Imperial Committee (or Coun-

"cil) would be those relating to foreign and commercial  
"policy, and the numerous matters in which it is desir-  
"able that organisation and legislation in different parts  
"of the Empire should be of a harmonious character,—  
"e.g., merchant shipping, copyright, naturalisation, ad-  
"mission of aliens, marriage, etc."

This makes the practical character of the scheme ab-  
solutely plain. He also says :—

"The Defence Committee is essentially an expert body,  
"and one reason for creating a general Imperial Commit-  
"tee is to avoid any temptation to burden the Defence  
"Committee with matters of policy outside its proper  
"business. Further, some of us think that other expert  
"committees on other special topics of interest to the  
"Empire as a whole, such as law, communications, and  
"commerce, might usefully be constituted in the near  
"future." But whether this be done or not, he pro-  
ceeds :—

"The Imperial Committee, however (or Council, if  
"that name should be preferred), would have to collect  
"and preserve a good deal of material. This need not  
"all be of a confidential kind in itself (though some of it  
"would be), nor very difficult of access; the point would  
"be to have it at hand, kept up to date, vouched for by  
"the best authorities as practically complete, and in  
"such order as to be readily accessible, at short notice  
"if required, for the use of the Cabinet, or, in the first  
"instance, of the Department specially concerned. For  
"this end, and for conducting a correspondence which  
"might become large, the Committee would require a  
"secretarial staff, whose members would belong to the  
"permanent service of the country. That staff might be  
"specially attached to the Prime Minister, as the head  
"of both the Cabinet and the Imperial Committee. Some  
"of us think that such an Imperial Committee and its  
"secretariat might, in course of time, fill an important  
"place in our Constitution, as a body including respon-  
"sible representatives of the chief members of the Em-  
"pire, and yet having a continuity, putting it above  
"party changes. This, if it came about, would only be  
"the institution giving proof of its utility. Meanwhile,  
"the experiment might be begun on a modest scale; if it  
"failed to justify itself, no harm would have been done.  
"At the very worst, the negative experience obtained  
"would be of some value. If, on the other hand, it suc-  
"ceeded, the results might be greater than any man now  
"living can forecast. As the object of the proposed



"Committee will not be to decide matters by a major-  
 "ity of votes, but to bring together in an advisory  
 "council representatives of the different parts of the Em-  
 "pire, it will not be necessary or desirable that its con-  
 "stitution should be of a rigid character. There should  
 "be delegates summoned to attend regularly on the rec-  
 "ommendation of each of the great self-governing States  
 "of the Empire, but the Prime Minister, or any other  
 "Minister of any colony, could be invited by the Presi-  
 "dent of the Committee to attend meetings; and so also  
 "could Ministers of the United Kingdom, whose assist-  
 "ance might be required for the discussion of any par-  
 "ticular question." (Note 5.)

### THE PRIVY COUNCIL.

These extracts disclose in bold outline the salient fea-  
 tures of the scheme. As to the manner in which it is  
 to be grafted upon the British constitution of to-day,  
 Sir F. Pollock says :—

"There remains one organ of our national constitu-  
 "tion which is still capable of being adopted to new  
 "functions. This is the Privy Council, of which the  
 "Cabinet itself is an informal committee, and from which  
 "several State departments, including the ultimate Court  
 "of Appeal for all parts of the Empire, except the  
 "United Kingdom, have derived their authority, however  
 "much that authority has been confirmed and remodelled  
 "by Acts of Parliament. It seems that, if an effective  
 "addition to the Councils of the Empire is to be made,  
 "we must look to the Privy Council to supply the ma-  
 "chinery for it."

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5. Privy Councillors, having once become members of the  
 Imperial Committee, would not cease to be members of it by  
 resigning office on a change of Ministry; and it might often  
 be discreet and profitable, in matters not leading to a Cabinet  
 decision of a controversial kind, for ex-Ministers to be invited  
 to give the Empire, as being above parties, the benefit of  
 their experience, and to add a new illustration to the just  
 and dignified name of "His Majesty's Opposition." The same  
 observation applies to any ex-Premiers of Colonies whose ser-  
 vices may happen to be available. On the other hand, there  
 would be nothing to prevent the occasional attendance of  
 skilled persons not being members of the Privy Council. I  
 do not mean only or chiefly politicians; explorers, merchants,  
 engineers, leading shipowners might all have things to say  
 which they would rather not put in a written report. Out-  
 siders have been invited to attend the Cabinet itself for  
 special purposes. (Pollock, pp. 11, 12.)

## IMPERIAL COURT OF APPEAL.

Finally he makes a significant addition, which all "Australians will approve when he adds :—

"We are also disposed to attach great importance to "the establishment of a single final Court of Appeal for "the United Kingdom and the Empire. The subject "cannot be discussed without entering on many technical "matters, and we are not aware that any definite plan "for consolidating the jurisdictions of the House of Lords "and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has "been framed. For the present, we think it sufficient to "express our opinion that the existence of a single Im- "perial Court of last resort would be a considerable ad- "dition to the visible dignity and the substantial unity "of the Empire; and that, if there is any general desire "for such a Court, neither political nor technical difficul- "ties will be found insuperable."

## SOME GOOD OMENS.

The possibilities of an early acceptance of some of Sir Frederick Pollock's ideas are to be observed in Great Britain, where, in spite of the keen struggle over the question of preferential trade, there has been a distinct movement in favour of the question being lifted above party issues at any conference that may be held. There is also what appears to be a response on the part of Mr. Haldane to the suggestion of Mr. Balfour that the question of the meeting of the next conference, due for next year, and the subjects which it will discuss, should be dealt with, irrespective of any battle between the ins and the outs, in the House of Commons. A standing Council or Committee, as planned, by collecting information and classifying it, would provide much of the knowledge necessary to any consistent course of Imperial action.

## MORE IMPERIAL PROBLEMS.

Many more illustrations of imperial opportunities and hazards might be given, but if you take only those I have selected to present to you to-day—the proposals of Sir Frederick Pollock, the consideration of our defences, whether by armed forces or tariff fortifications, or both, it will be noticed that each of these raises the main question in debate, How are we to arrive at a constitutional federation of some kind? The problem can be approached from many other directions, and none are forbidden to us in this League. Every imperial question on its imperial side will be always pertinent to our pro-

ceedings. For instance, those arising out of mail contracts and shipping facilities, not only for their own immediate purposes, but as preparations for defence, are well worthy of consideration; immigration, in order that Australia may be better able to protect herself, and especially immigration from the mother country (an imperial question with a very imperial side); cable communication, or wireless telegraphy, and the consulting together of different parts of the Empire—all these will involve financial considerations, which cannot be banished from our minds. Imperial finance is almost a virgin field to-day, but it cannot long remain neglected. We have yet to answer the question—the great question—as to how the enormous money power of the Empire can be best used for its own development.

### A NON-PARTY LEAGUE.

I hope it is not supposed that we wish to restrict our Society merely to debate. What we desire is to see the launching—gradually, not all at once, and I hope with wisdom,—but the launching, whenever public opinion affords an opportunity, of some of these pressing imperial questions for public consideration. Action will follow, though it will not be in the League. It is our business to plough and sow, but not to attempt to arrogate to ourselves any political influence or interference. Beginning in an unpretentious way, and continuing as a strictly non-party body, we may do some small service by inducing our fellow-countrymen to look a little ahead. Surely they should make themselves better aware of their imperial powers and perils than they are to-day, and encourage our Parliament to provide for them before it is too late. Our ambition here is to prepare the way, fix the facts, elucidate principles, and foster unity of conviction.

### SPECIAL CHARACTER OF THIS LEAGUE.

There are several other Associations, of a similar character to this League, already in existence; but they do not detract from us in any way, because they are all partial in their aims. Some consider defence alone, some trade alone; but none of them face the constitutional problem which always accompanies and generally underlies every other problem. We see no antagonists or antagonism, since all the range of the activities of the other bodies is open to us, besides the most vital, which is specially our own. The Imperial Federation League, the oldest, although it has temporarily disappeared in Great Britain and Canada, or taken another



name, must revive everywhere whenever we come to the crux of the imperial issue. The fundamental and difficult question that we have to confront, and which we have made specially our own, is how to reconcile the unity of the whole Empire with the self-government of its parts. Except this be accomplished by some form of federation, we are unable to understand how it can be achieved, but achieved it ought to be as best we can. We are knitted together already by racial feelings and patriotism in Australia, and to our kinsmen beyond the seas. Our ambition is to be more effectively linked with New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and the Mother Country for the fulfilment of our destiny. Our federal form of government here differs from that subsisting in Ottawa almost as much as our State Government differs from that of England within its purely local domain. These differences are in form alone. The spirit of our political life and its constitutional principles are the same, and should in course of time assert their identity. Citizenship is like civilisation in that it yields its privileges only in return for sacrifices. None of these last are retained that are not ultimately admitted to be essential. It is the universal experience in regard to them that they are richly rewarded, and that, properly speaking, they are not sacrifices at all. Imperial citizenship will prove to be of the same nature, and any acceptance of responsibility will be amply repaid. One of our tasks as a League is to satisfy the public of that. Every development towards it means more power for Australia, and more power for our race. We must define our responsibilities in order to obtain our share of the control of the Empire. The Crown is now the one symbol of imperial unity, since it enables every man and woman beneath its sway to claim an equal recognition as a fellow subject. The self-governing peoples of the Empire will not have entered into or fully possessed their heritage until they also become fellow-citizens. (Applause.)



# Imperial Federation League

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## CONSTITUTION OF THE LEAGUE

Adopted at the Annual Meeting held at the  
Melbourne Town Hall, 25th March, 1895

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### **OBJECTS OF THE LEAGUE :**

1. To maintain the Unity of the British Dominions.
2. To strengthen it in the future by SOME FORM OF  
FEDERATION.

### **FUNDAMENTAL RESOLUTIONS :**

1. That the chief objects of the League be to secure by Federation the permanent unity of the Empire.
  2. That no scheme of Federation should interfere with the existing rights of Local Parliaments as regards local affairs.
  3. That permanent Federation can be secured and maintained only by a system of common defence, devised and eventually controlled by representatives from all parts of the Empire.
  4. That the details of any scheme affecting the common interests of the Empire can only be properly considered by conferences of representatives from all parts of the Empire ; therefore the establishment of such conferences should be a constant aim of this League.
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**No sum has been fixed as the subscription to the League. Each member fixes the amount of his annual contribution for himself, and this may be forwarded to the Hon. Treasurer, "Hallatrow," Kew, or to Mr. C. C. Jones, 1 Perth Street, Prahran.**



# Imperial Federation League



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